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ABSTRACT

Described in this report is the Saturday Afternoon Free respite care program for moderately to severely handicapped children operated under the auspices of the Idaho State University (ISU) College of Education. In service for 4 years, it has been evaluated by parents and student participants as excellent. It was developed in response to the need expressed by local parents of handicapped children for "down time" for their families as well as to the perception that establishment of a Saturday School would benefit the special education teaching program by providing an on-site practicum facility where special education students could have hands-on experience with severely involved children under the supervision of a faculty member. The program serves 15 children each Saturday and includes feeding programs, fine and gross motor activities, language development, and music therapy. It is staffed by one paid employee, volunteers from the ISU Council for Exceptional Children, and students in the Mainstreaming and Multicultural Education class. A special education faculty member volunteers time to supervise the program. The two goals of the program are to provide quality care for the children and to give exposure to a wide variety of teachers-in- training so they will more readily accept a handicapped child into their classrooms in a mainstreamed setting. This program was awarded the Purple Heart Award by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. (SM)

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SATURDAY AFTERNOON FREE

A RESPITE CARE PROGRAM FOR MODERATELY TO SEVERELY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

College of Education
Idaho State University
Pocatello, ID. 83109

Contact Person:

Carol M. Stenson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Counselor Education & Special Education
Box 8059 - ISU
Pocatello, ID 83209

(208) 236-3156

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Saturday Afternoon Free is a respite care program for moderately to severely handicapped children operated under the auspices of the Idaho State University College of Education. The program serves 15 children each Saturday from noon until 4 p.m. Included in the programming for these children are feeding programs, fine and gross motor activities, language development and music therapy. Staffing is provided by the ISU Student Council for Exceptional Children and by undergraduate students taking the required Mainstreaming and Multicultural Education course. Faculty supervision is provided by a member of the department staff. Funding for the program is from a grant of the Greater Pocatello United Fund Campaign and proceeds from investment of an American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Purple Heart Award of $11,500. Evaluation information, a VCR presentation on the program and a how-to-do-it manual are available from the principal investigator.

INTRODUCTION

"Saturday Afternoon Free" is a respite care program for moderately to severely handicapped children sponsored by the Counselor Education and Special Education department of Idaho State University and by the ISU Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children. The program has been in operation for four years, and has been evaluated by both parents and student participants as excellent. Started with a grant from the Idaho Developmental Disabilities Council, the program has become nearly self-sufficient, but does receive some funding from the Greater Pocatello United Campaign. Substantial resources are provided by the College and University.

This document will detail background, organizational structure, funding, evaluation and benefits of the project. There are no similar projects in existence, but the state of Kentucky has indicated an interest in establishing a similar group of programs to assist in meeting the needs of their population of severely emotionally disturbed school age children.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1983, the principal investigator of this project was contacted by the parent of a profoundly handicapped child and asked to submit a proposal to the Idaho Developmental Disabilities Council to provide respite care. The Idaho DD Council was calling for proposals for a $20,000 grant to help facilitate respite care across Idaho. Idaho State University applied for and received the grant. ISU's primary focus was on pre-school and school age children, and the program was planned to serve that population. In order to reach the full range of handicapped, ISU sub-contracted with the Special Education Department of the University of Idaho to develop a program of respite care for adolescents and adults. While that program was developed and operated during the life of the grant, when external funding was discontinued, the University of Idaho's project also ended. Information on their project is available on request from the ISU project.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare provides "on-call" respite care on a very limited basis to care-givers of severely handicapped children, but the parent who asked ISU to respond to the DD Call for Proposals was not interested in that type of care. What she needed was dependable, predictable, consistent child care on weekends which would allow her to spend quality time with her normal children and family. In order to meet this need, it was determined that Saturday afternoon would be an ideal time to provide care for two reasons: (1) Undergraduate and graduate special education students were available at that time, and (2) faculty to staff the program has no other time commitments on

Saturday afternoons. Thus, "Saturday Afternoon Free" was established.

At the end of the year of funding from the Developmental Disabilities Council, the principal investigator applied for and received supplemental monies from the Greater Pocatello United Campaign. First year funding from the source was $4500. In subsequent years, funding from this source has been necessary in gradually decreasing increments as more and more of the costs of the program have been assumed by the College of Education, the ISU Council for Exceptional Children Chapter, and proceeds from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Purple Heart Award, which was received in 1984. Ten thousand of the original $11,500 of that award was placed in the Idaho State University Foundation and monies accrued from that sum have been used to support the program. In addition, the Department of Counselor Education and Special Education has awarded the services of a Teaching Assistant for three of the last four years.

In addition to the very clear need expressed by local parents of handicapped children for "down time" for their families, it was perceived that establishment of a Saturday School would also benefit the special education teaching program in that it would provide an on-site practicum facility where all special education students could have hands-on experience with very severely involved children under the direct supervision of a faculty member. This has indeed been the case, and this notion has been expanded to include all student preparing to become teachers at Idaho State University.

Beginning in 1987, a curricular change in the Teacher Education Program gave the Department of Counselor Education and Special Education a 2-credit course, required of all certifying teachers, called Mainstreaming and Multicultural Education. Special Education faculty teach the first half of the course, and as part of the experience, every student in the class is required to observe for two hours and teach in the facility for two hours under the direct supervision of special education faculty and graduate students. This portion of the program has been evaluated every semester and the response has been overwhelming. Not only have approximately 98% of the students involved reported a better understanding for the needs of handicapped students and more willingness to be open to mainstreaming in their classes, but many of these students are being recruited to carry double majors in education and special education and certify as special education teachers. This is particularly important as there is a dramatic need for more special education teachers in Idaho. Currently, Idaho has an approximately 33% turnover of special education teachers annually, and this area has been identified by the Idaho Professional Standards Commission as the area in which the highest number of temporary Letters of Authorization for uncertified teachers have been received for the last five years.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

"Saturday Afternoon Free" is a respite care program operated in the clinical classroom facilities of the College of Education of Idaho State University every Saturday during the school year from noon until 4:00 p.m. The program enrolls 15 students each semester on the basis of parent or agency referral. Children served range from mildly mentally retarded to a child who is profoundly retarded, deaf and blind and is currently in foster care. The program is staffed by one paid employee, usually a graduate assistant who performs this task as his/her teaching assignment. In addition, volunteers from the ISU Council for Exceptional Children give approximately 20 hours each per semester and students in the Mainstreaming and Multicultural Education class are required to observe for 2 hours and teach for 2 hours as part of their class assignment. The student-teacher ratio is usually 1:1 and never more than 1:1.5. A special education faculty member volunteers her time each week to supervise the program. The role of the graduate assistant is to serve as head teacher, do all of the planning and purchasing of materials and coordinate activities.

The facility used for the program is a clinical classroom equipped for preschool and early childhood special education. Materials used in the program have either been purchased through grant funds, or are "leftovers" from summer practica of previous years. The facility is approximately 30x50 feet in size, with one half carpeted and one half tiled. Sink and storage facilities are available in the room. Adjacent to the classroom are two full bathrooms, both of which have full handicap access, as does the building housing the program. In addition to the classroom, there is a 10x40 observation room with one-way visual and acoustical capabilities. There is also a 10x10 private area for changing diapers and clothing as needed.

The program starts each Saturday with lunch. The graduate assistant plans the lunches, and students working in the program assist with preparation. Lunches are well-balanced and planned so that they can be cooked using the department's microwave oven. The lunch is important because it frees parents to have lunch out with siblings of the handicapped child, and it provides students with opportunities to learn feeding techniques for children who have eating programs as part of their Individual Education Plans.

Following lunch, there is a fine motor activity, usually a cut and paste or paint project. At approximately 1:30, a volunteer music therapist from the community comes and does music with the children for a half hour. From 2:00 to 2:30, the children have free play in an adjacent fenced playground which is part of ISU's Early Learning Center, and adjacent to the clinical classroom. Recess is followed by a short snack, usually fruit and milk. At 2:45, students from the Elementary Children's Literature Class come in pairs and do a story hour appropriate to the children's level of understanding. This includes a pre-reading activity, reading

of a story, and a post-reading activity.

The day ends with structured gross motor activities including tumbling, dance and early childhood games. Special activities have included presentation of plays for parents, learning presentations for Idaho's Very Special Arts Festival, and various field trips to spots of local interest.

The goals of the program are two-fold. First, the goal is to provide quality care for the children enrolled. The second goal is to give exposure to a wide variety of teachers-in-training so that they will more readily accept a handicapped child into their classroom in a mainstreamed setting.

Funding for the project started with a $20,000 grant from the Idaho Developmental Disabilities Council. Of that $20,000, $10,000 was sub-contracted to the University of Idaho. Of the remaining $10,000, $5,000 was used the first year to pay for the services of a graduate assistant. The remainder was used for materials, supplies and dissemination activities. At the end of that funding period, the Greater Pocatello United Campaign was approached, and funded the project for $4,500 for one year's operation. These monies were earmarked for hiring a coordinator, but they were not all used, as a mature undergraduate student was hired at less cost. The carryover money supported the materials and supplies part of the project for a year and the Department of Counselor Education and Special Education committed a graduate assistant to the project as coordinator for that year. That commitment has prevailed, and the Pocatello United Campaign is not giving only token monies in order to keep Saturday Afternoon Free as one of their sponsor organizations and in the public eye.

In addition to the monies cited above, the project received the AACTE Purple Heart Award of $11,500 in 1984. Of those funds, $10,000 were placed in the ISU Foundation and the program now purchases its materials and supplies from funds earned by the award. Thus, the program is currently fiscally sound, and should remain so as long as the teaching assistant is made available.

Faculty time is donated and is not part of teaching load. This creates some stress as we are a small faculty and only one faculty member participates in the program. However, the benefits accrued far outweigh the problems. The project is currently in its fifth year of operation and there are no plans to discontinue it. The program cannot grow beyond 15 children because the facility used is limited to that number.

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The original Developmental Disabilities Grant was evaluated by an outside, independent evaluator twice during the initial year of operation. All parents were polled and interviewed during that process. One a scale of one to five, the overall program was rated as five by all of the parents participating that year. Since that

time, there has been no outside evaluation, but on-going evaluation is done by using the standard departmental course evaluation forms for both Mainstreaming and Multicultural Education and Seminar in Special Education, which is the course title for the Council for Exceptional Children organization. Both groups of students regularly rate their experiences as very positive and ask for more time in the facility. In the five years the program has operated, no child has been withdrawn unless the parents have left the area or the child has become too old for the activities. An average of 13 children attend each week. Informal feed-back from the parents has been excellent and positive in every respect. Parents are encouraged to observe the program before and during their child's participation and are often involved in activities. Hard data on evaluations is available on request.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on all evaluations to date, this program has been judged to be outstanding for all participants. It was awarded the Purple Heart Award by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. It has been viewed as a positive experience, even by teachers-in-training who do not intend to become special education teachers. Presentations on the project have been made at the Idaho Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children and at a national Conference of CEC. As a result of the national presentation, the state of Kentucky is currently working on replicating the program to serve moderately to severely emotionally disturbed children. Information on this model is available on request.

This would appear to be a very viable project for any small teacher training institution without a laboratory school, but with classroom facilities to house it. It provides pre-service, supervised training for both regular and special educators. It is not an expensive program if small contributions can be made by the host institution. It provides an excellent public relations image for the host institution as well as a superior service to parents. Given the services of a faculty member and graduate assistant, the program can operate easily for approximately $750 per academic year. Idaho State University will provide consultant services for any institution interested in replicating the program. A VCR overview presentation and how-to-do-it manual are available on request.